



Childhood Connections

October 4, 2023

Spotlight on Professionals

Spotlight on Professionals aims to share stories from those working in childhood programs. This includes all professionals such as home visiting, early intervention, child care, Head Start, preschool, and afterschool. These stories are also available on the [Early Connections website](#).



This month's "Spotlight on Professionals" focuses on Carron Miesner, a parent educator serving Clay County, Missouri with Easterseals Midwest.

Carron graduated from Avila University in Kansas City, Missouri with her bachelor's in business administration and an emphasis in paralegal studies. Working in law, she began to grow her family and found herself scaling back her office work. In 2002, she quit her office job to stay home with her children until they moved on to school. She then began volunteering at her youngest child's preschool, which eventually led to her becoming a full-time preschool teacher.

Once all her children entered elementary school, she felt she was at a crossroads. She knew about home visitors from receiving services for her own children. Carron explained, "it just so happened that there were some parents as teachers jobs that popped up. A light bulb went on – that is exactly what I wanted to do."

In 2008, Carron was offered a position as a parent educator through Parents as Teachers for Hickman Mills School District. She loved it! She said it was a "really great job" and she gained "a lot of experience from them."

In 2010, Carron moved over to Easterseals Midwest as a parent educator. Shortly after, in 2011, she enrolled in Metropolitan Community College and received her certification in early childhood development. In 2021, Carron moved from working with families of children birth to three years old to children

three to 19 years old. She feels she can relate better with these families and share her experiences and challenges as a mother of older children.

"My job has moved and conformed to my life. Everything is so applicable. As a parent educator, I use my own knowledge of child development with the families I work with. I also use the experience from my kids being in the program to share with other parents."

ANNOUNCEMENT! Missouri Quality Prekindergarten (MOQPK) Grants Awarded

The Office of Childhood (OOC) is excited to announce the recipients of the new Missouri Quality Prekindergarten (MOQPK) Grants for local education agencies (LEA), which was appropriated in House Bill 20 for Fiscal Year 2024.

The MOQPK-LEA Grant program is designed to expand the funding for prekindergarten (Pre-K) instruction and increase access for families with low-income.

These grants were available to LEAs that are licensed or contracted with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Child Care Subsidy program.

One hundred twenty-six LEAs were awarded the MOQPK Grant. [To view a complete award list, visit the MOQPK website.](#)

OOC staff are planning for a second round of MOQPK grant opportunities for both LEAs and Child Care. Watch for an announcement coming soon.

ANNOUNCEMENT! Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is Coming Statewide to Missouri!



DESE and The Dollywood Foundation are working together to establish a statewide Imagination Library program, which will be rolled out later this year.



REMINDER! Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC) Meeting

The next meeting of the ECSAC will be on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, at 12:30 p.m.

The agenda and related presentation materials will be posted on the [ECSAC meeting webpage](#) approximately one week before the meeting.

NEW! October is Safe Sleep Awareness Month

October is Safe Sleep Awareness month. The following tips can help keep sleeping babies safe:

- Swaddled babies should only be placed on their back.
- Weighted swaddles or other weighted objects are not recommended.
- When baby shows any attempt at rolling over, swaddling is not appropriate and unsafe.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books each month to children from birth to age five. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program delivers a brand new, age-appropriate, and specially-selected book each month to the homes of enrolled children from birth to the child's fifth birthday, and at no cost to the family.

The Missouri Imagination Library was made possible by legislation (Section 178.694 RSMo) and funding included in Fiscal Year 2024 budget for DESE's Office of Childhood to establish and administer Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for all children under age five in Missouri. There will be no cost to school districts for the books or the postage to deliver them.

There's nothing that school districts need to do right now, other than to begin thinking about how schools and community partners can promote the upcoming program to families in the community. Watch for information from DESE later this year with details on how to help families in your community sign up for the library.

REMINDER! Process Change for Background Checks for Child Care Staff Members

The OOC wants to alert you to important changes to the background screening process for child care staff members.

Effective October 1, 2023, the order of the steps in the background screening process are changing.

- **New process:** Before a current or prospective child care staff member can be fingerprinted, you must first send a completed Comprehensive Background Check Notification form to the background screening unit within the OOC. You will no longer be able to access the fingerprint code or instructions online.
 - This change in process is necessary for Missouri to be in compliance with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Missouri State Highway Patrol requirements.
- Once the OOC reviews the information, the background screening unit will inform you by email of the fingerprint instructions for the individual(s) that do not have a

Under the federal Safe Sleep for Babies Act unsafe, potentially dangerous sleep products, such as in bed sleepers, inclined sleepers, loungers, and compact sleepers are no longer legal as of mid-2022.

[Learn more in this free Safe to Sleep tool kit.](#)

REMINDER! Comprehensive Background Screening

We are fast approaching the 5-year anniversary of implementing the comprehensive background screening process.

The approaching anniversary will affect many providers, including Licensed Family Homes, Group Homes, Centers, and School-Age programs, and License-Exempt Nursery Schools, as well as Subsidy providers.

Don't wait until the last minute. Make sure to do your own self-assessments and file reviews to ensure your staff records are up-to-date. [Visit our website to learn more about the 5-year re-determination process.](#)

NEW! 21st Century Community Learning Center Afterschool Grants

The OOC's Afterschool Program has recently

comprehensive background screening within the last 5 years and need to complete the fingerprint process.

When the results of both the fingerprints and Family Care Safety Registry screening are available for review by the background screening unit, they will notify the provider and the child care staff member of the results determining if the individual is eligible or ineligible to work or be present in a child care setting.

NEW! Child Care Licensing Indicator System

The OOC Child Care Compliance team has partnered with the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) on a three-year project to develop a Child Care Licensing Indicator System.

This system will allow the compliance inspection team to use an abbreviated inspection strategy to determine the frequency or depth of inspection based on a program's history of compliance with licensing rules.

For more information on this project, please [see this informational flyer](#).

UPDATE! The Missouri School Age Conference

The Missouri School Age Conference (MOSAC) for any school-age afterschool programs will be held November 17-19, 2023, at The Lodge of Four Seasons at Lake Ozark, Missouri.

You do not have to be a current grantee to attend. This conference is tailored to meet the unique needs of afterschool professionals by increasing:

- knowledge regarding youth development
- resources for programming ideas
- skills for working with staff, youth, and families of afterschool programs
- networking opportunities with other afterschool professionals to promote collaboration in the community.

[For more information or to register for this event, visit MOSAC2.](#)

REMINDER! Fingerprint Payment

awarded competitive 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool grants.

For a listing of recipients, please visit the [Afterschool Programs website](#).

NEW! Parent Advisory Council Website Update

The [Parent Advisory Council](#) and [Family Leadership](#) pages have been updated – you can find these under the “Get Connected” tab on the [Early Connections](#) home page.

These pages now include contact information for each of the [four Regional Parent Advisory Council sites](#).

UPDATE! Child Care Subsidy Information

Income eligibility for the child care subsidy program is based on several pieces of information, including the federal poverty level (FPL) and cost of living per census data. These federal data are updated annually, which can result in an adjustment to eligibility income limits for the child care subsidy program. If there are any cost of living adjustments (COLA), these are applied to the subsidy program in October each year.

The COLA update for 2023-24 resulted in a

Effective October 1, 2023, the OOC started paying for the cost of fingerprinting for the purpose of the required criminal background check for child care staff members. The OOC will pay for fingerprinting until further notice.

- OOC will *not* issue reimbursement:
 - If there is any issue with the DESE automatic billing account and the individual chooses to pay for the cost of fingerprinting; or
 - For those who register to be fingerprinted or complete fingerprinting prior to October 1, 2023.

NEW! Training Opportunity

The OOC Early Intervention section is excited to share that seven videos on Strong Parents, Stable Children: Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families are now available online to support the trainings offered earlier this summer by Dr. Dave Schramm.

The trainings and videos were offered to First Steps Providers and SPOE staff with funds received through the American Rescue Plan (ARP). The trainings focused on providing research-based information and tools for professionals who work with parents to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

A total of 619 providers and SPOE staff attended the in-person trainings throughout Missouri. Pre-test findings showed 6.2% of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” to being knowledgeable or being aware of each of the protective factors.

However, the post-test findings showed 93.7% of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” to being knowledgeable or being aware of each of the protective factors. This is a significant increase in knowledge base and shows participants took away valuable information to assist them in their future work with families.

To view Dr. Schramm’s Strong Parents, Stable Children: Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families recorded videos with supplemental handouts and resources, please visit the [First Steps](#)

slight increase to the family size/income limits, which means a few families may be eligible who were not eligible previously.

However, the COLA update did not change the FPL used for eligibility or the sliding fee rates for families. OOC updated the [Subsidy Income Limits and Sliding Fee Chart \(October 2023\)](#) to reflect the eligibility income limits per the current FPL adjustments.

Visit the [child care subsidy webpage](#) for more information about the subsidy program.

UPDATE! Community Leaders Map

The community leader map has been updated to reflect the new regions and community leaders.

You can find the map and the contact information for selected community leaders at the [Community Leader Map website](#).

REMINDER! Seasonal Flu Prevention Tips from Elmo

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention partnered with Sesame Street to produce a new video featuring Elmo explaining ways to stay healthy this flu season.

Check out [this video](#), which can help kids

[Training website](#) and click on “Recorded Trainings On-Demand.”

As a reminder, viewing the recorded videos can count towards professional development hours required by DESE for non-licensed First Steps providers.

REMINDER! Early Care and Education Resource & Referral - Child Care Search

If you are trying to find child care or local resources, a Community Support Specialists can help you.

You can reach a specialist in the following ways:

- Phone: 866-583-2392. Dial ext. 1 to find child care options, ext. 2 to learn about local resources, or ext. 3 for First Steps
- Email: programresources@united4children.org
- Live chat with a specialist: Visit <https://united4children.org/resource-and-referral/>, and click on the chat icon in the bottom right corner of your screen.
- Text message or video call: Contact a specialist using one of the methods above and let them know how you would like to text or schedule a video call.

Community Support Specialists are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT! 2023 Statewide ShakeOut Earthquake Drill

practice habits, such as washing their hands and sneezing into their elbows.

REMINDER! Appropriate Restraints Must be Used with Feeding Equipment

This is a reminder to all licensed child care providers:

Licensing rules require appropriate restraints to be used with mealtime feeding equipment.

This would include, feeding tables, high chairs, infant seats, or other infant seating equipment.

See Family Home rule [5 CSR 25-400.095 \(1\) \(C\) 2](#) and Group Home/Center rule [5 CSR 25-500.092 \(1\) \(C\) 2](#) for more information.

UPDATE! Quality Assurance Report (QAR) Webpage

The QAR webpage has been updated to include the 2023 interim report, an updated list of participants, and a link to apply to join the QAR program. To learn more, visit the [OOC QAR webpage](#).

SAVE THE DATE! Conference on the Young Years

The 51st Conference on the Young Years will be March 7-9, 2024, at Tan-Tar-A Conference Center



in Osage Beach, Missouri.

The 2024 theme for the conference is "Explore the Possibilities."

The OOC is planning a great lineup of keynote and featured speakers along with many breakout session presenters.

Vendors & exhibitors may now [reserve their booth space for CYY 2024](#). Sponsorships are also available.

On **Thursday, October 19, 2023**, programs with preschool and school-age children are encouraged to participate in the annual Central U.S. ShakeOut earthquake drill. Hundreds of thousands of Missouri students participate each year. Participants will practice the "Drop, Cover, Hold On" technique to protect themselves in the event of an earthquake. Remember you should:

- DROP to your hands and knees
- COVER your head and neck with your hands and arms under a table or desk if you can
- HOLD ON until the shaking stops

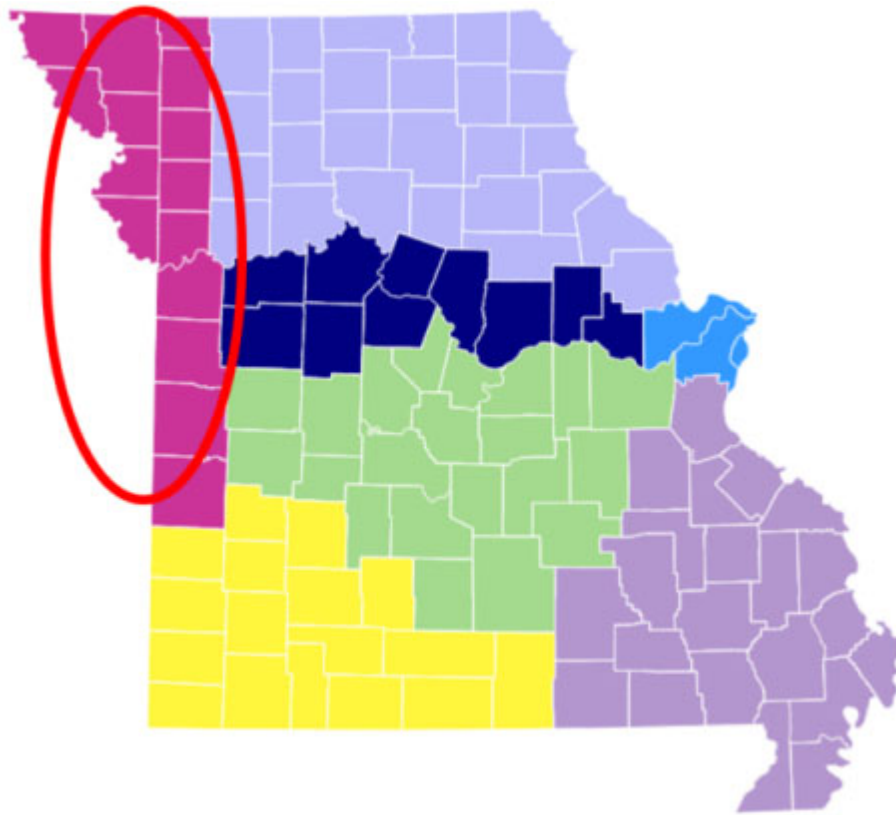
Experts say Drop, Cover, Hold On is the best protection from falling debris, which is the most likely cause of injury during an earthquake in developed nations with modern building standards.

[To learn more and to register for the event, please visit Shakeout.org/centralus.](#)

Make plans to join us for the 2024 conference and "explore the possibilities" with us.

Spotlight on Success

Spotlight on Success aims to share stories from local programs that are building community partnerships in order to strengthen and coordinate childhood programs.



Community leaders, Mary Bradford, Kylee Strough, and Bobbie Cronk, in the Northwest region of the state, have established strong relationships with early childhood stakeholders in their region. A routine of monthly meetings engaged community leaders with their stakeholders. During these monthly meetings, the group discusses the importance of developmental screenings for all young children and identify the need to leverage stakeholder's relationships in the community. This relationship would help increase the number of young children receiving developmental screenings before kindergarten.

The community leaders collaborated with the staff at the local Head Start program and the Cameron R-1 Missouri Parents as Teachers Parent Education program. This partnership provides developmental screenings at no cost to all children enrolled in the program. Parent educators are working to continue this partnership and provide yearly youth developmental screenings.

Mary Bradford says, "The opportunity to partner with another agency is an all-around win! Learning to collaborate effectively and efficiently through our mutual goals should be our ultimate intention as we grow into communities of support; wrapping around families to promote healthy children."

UPDATE! Preschool Development Grant



The Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five (PDG B-5) provides funding over three years to coordinate a more effective, high-quality early childhood system that better prepares Missouri children for success.

Each month the OOC hosts a live webinar to provide updates and information about the PDG B-5 to stakeholders. A [recording](#) and the [PowerPoint slides](#) from

the September webinar is available in case you were unable to attend and wish to hear the information. You can view archived webinars here:

- [August 2023](#)
- [July 2023](#)
- [June 2023](#)
- [May 2023](#)
- [April 2023](#)
- [March 2023](#)

The [PDG B-5 dashboard](#) is also updated monthly. This dashboard provides an at-a-glance look at priority areas, budget status, and key accomplishments.

PDG B-5 Monthly Webinar

Join us for the next PDG B-5 Stakeholder webinar on Tuesday, October 31, 2023, from noon to 12:45 p.m. to learn more and ask questions. You can [access the webinar](#) in a Google Chrome or Safari web browser. Do not view in Internet Explorer. We hope you can participate!

For questions about the stakeholder webinar series, or suggestions for topics in future webinars, email us at Childhood@dese.mo.gov.

Archived Editions of Childhood Connections

[Visit the OOC website to find previous editions of the Childhood Connections.](#)

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or any other basis prohibited by statute in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title VII/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov.



DESE Office of Childhood | 205 Jefferson Street - 1st Floor | Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Report Spam](#)